

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-09 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-14

USIA-04 DRC-01 /057 W

----- 026449

R 071620Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4530

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

AMCONSUL BELFAST

AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

AMCONSUL LIVERPOOL

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION: THREE DAYS TO GO

SUMMARY - WITH ONLY THREE DAYS TO GO, THE CONSERVATIVES ARE PRESSING HARD TO EXPLOIT POPULAR SENTIMENT FOR A COALITION GOVERNMENT TO COPE WITH BRITAIN'S ECONOMIC CRISIS. OPINION POLLS PUT LABOR WELL AHEAD, BUT COMPLACENCY AND APATHY COULD STILL ROB THEM OF THE CLEAR MAJORITY THEY WANT. LIBERALS SEE LITTLE HOPE OF MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH, BUT, LIKE THE SCOTTISH NATIONALISTS, POSE A GREATER THREAT TO CONSERVATIVES THAN TO LABOR.

END SUMMARY

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1. IN A FINAL MESSAGE TO TORY CANDIDATES OCTOBER 6, HEATH HAMMERED ON THE NEED FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY. HE PROMISED, IF CONSERVATIVES WIN A MAJORITY ON THURSDAY, "TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT...REPRESENTING MEN AND WOMEN OF GOOD WILL OF ALL PARTIES AND OF NONE." HE CRITICIZED LABOR FOR REJECTING "THIS NATIONAL APPROACH" AND FOR PUTTING FORWARD "A MOST DIVISIVE AND EXTREME PROGRAM." THE LIBERALS, HE SAID, WERE EQUIVOCAL. ONLY THE CONSERVATIVES, HE CLAIMED, HAD PUT FORWARD A PROGRAM CAREFULLY FRAMED TO EXCLUDE DIVISIVE POLICIES.

2. PRIME MINISTER WILSON PROMPTLY CASTIGATED THE GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY ENVISAGED BY HEATH AS A "SPURIOUS COMBINATION" BEREFT OF POLICIES AND DESIGNED TO PLAY ON THE NATURAL DESIRE OF PEOPLE TO FIND A COMFORTABLE SOLUTION. EARLIER, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE OCTOBER 5, HE HAD CONDEMNED THE WHOLE IDEA AS "A DESPERATE ATTEMPT BY

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R 071620Z OCT 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4531

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

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DESPERATE MEN TO GET BACK INTO POWER BY ANY MEANS."

3. COMMENT: CONSERVATIVE STRATEGISTS HAVE TOLD US THAT THEY HAVE BEEN PACING THEIR CAMPAIGN VERY CAREFULLY, FIRST TO PROJECT A NEW IMAGE OF HEATH AS A MAN OF MODERATION AND CONCILIATION, AND NOW TO PUSH FOR A GOVERNMENT OF NATIONAL UNITY AS THE ONLY WAY TO COPE WITH THE ECONOMIC CRISIS. THEY ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THEY WERE SLOW TO GET GOING AND THEREBY LET LABOR MAKE MOST OF THE RUNNING AT THE BEGINNING OF THE CAMPAIGN, BUT IF THEY HAVE THEIR TIMING RIGHT, THEY HOPE TO CLOSE THE GAP AND OVERTAKE LABOR ON ELECTION DAY. CLEARLY THEIR TASK WOULD HAVE BEEN EASIER IF THE PARTY HAD BEEN ABLE TO FIELD A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NEW LEADER (E.G., WHITELAW) TO FIT THE NEW IMAGE, BUT AT ANY RATE THEY BELIEVE THEY SENSE THE MOOD OF THE COUNTRY AND HAVE AT LEAST A CHANCE OF REPEATING THEIR SURPRISE VICTORY IN 1970.

4. LABOR STRATEGISTS, FOR THEIR PART, ALSO WITH 1970 IN MIND, ARE MAINLY CONCERNED THAT COMPLACENCY AND A LOW VOTER TURN-OUT COULD ROB THEM OF THE CLEAR VICTORY NOW FORECAST BY THE OPINION POLLS. TO MAINTAIN THE MOMENTUM OF LABOR'S CAMPAIGN, WILSON AND OTHER PARTY LEADERS HAVE SHARPENED THEIR CRITICISM OF THE TORIES, THEIR RECORD, AND THEIR POLICIES, AND PLAN TO KEEP UP THE PRESSURE RIGHT TO THE END.

5. THE LIBERALS HAVE PUT UP A CREDITABLE CAMPAIGN BUT NOW SENSE THAT THEY ARE NOT GOING TO MAKE THE BIG BREAK-THROUGH IN SEATS THEY HAD HOPED FOR. IN THE CLOSING DAYS OF THE CAMPAIGN THEY WILL CONCENTRATE ON MARGINALS, MOST OF THEM CURRENTLY HELD BY TORIES. TO ADD TO TORY UNHAPPINESS, REPORTS FROM SCOTLAND INDICATE THAT CONSERVATIVE SUPPORT THERE IS IN DANGER OF COLLAPSING UNDER RISING NATIONALIST SENTIMENT.

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